ISSN: (Online) 2072-8050, (Print) 0259-9422



# From a pit to a palace: Deconstructing the economics and politics of labour migration in the City of Tshwane through the lenses of Genesis 41:41–57

**Authors:**
Thinandavha D. Mashau[1]
Leomile Mangoedi[1]

**Affiliations:**
[1]Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology, College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa, City of Tshwane, South Africa

**Corresponding author:**
Thinandavha Mashau,
mashatd@unisa.ac.za

**Dates:**
Received: 05 Aug. 2020
Accepted: 12 Jan. 2021
Published: 12 Apr. 2021

**How to cite this article:**
Mashau, T.D. & Mangoedi, L., 2021, 'From a pit to a palace: Deconstructing the economics and politics of labour migration in the City of Tshwane through the lenses of Genesis 41:41–57', *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 77(4), a6289. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.6289





Migration to the City of Tshwane has, amongst others, been propelled by economic and political dynamics. This has always manifested in the scramble for resources as internal and cross-border migrants struggle to access the mainstream economy of the host city and country. Competition between locals and foreign nationals, social exclusion and xenophobic attacks on foreign nationals has always been part of the narrative around political and economic migration. This article seeks to provide a deconstruction of the economics and politics of migration – particularly how cross-border labour migrants can benefit the host city and country. Using the literature review and contextual Bible study of Genesis 41:41–57 from the lenses of both trained and ordinary readers, this article concluded that cross-border migrants, given the necessary space and proper reception, can contribute immensely towards the growth of the mainstream economy of the host city and nation as demonstrated by Joseph's contribution in Egypt.

**Contribution:** This article's contribution is within a paradigm in which the intersection of philosophy, social sciences, humanities and biblical studies generates a scientific discourse which involves a systematic, historical, exegetical and practical reflection.

**Keywords:** pit; palace; deconstructing; economics; politics; labour; migration; City of Tshwane; Genesis 41:41–57.

## Introduction

Migration in South Africa is on the rise (Gordon 2019:270) and movement to the City of Tshwane is no different (Mashau 2019a; Ribbens & De Beer 2017). Renkin (2017:1) opined that migration 'has always been part of humanity, but not at the magnitude we find today'. South Africa has, to date, recorded over 4.2 million foreign nationals (Newaj 2020:2), whilst the number of undocumented and illegal foreign migrants is estimated to be millions, although unknown. The movement is rapid, and it refers to both internal and cross-border migration. It is asserted by Adepoju (2019:2) that '[*i*]ntra- and intercountry movements continue to be a central feature of life for the people of Africa'. In the efforts to map out migration in the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), Adepoju (2005) defined the complexity of this phenomenon as follows:

> Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is a region characterized by a variety of migration configurations, including cross-border movements; contract workers; labour migrants; and the migration of skilled professionals, refugees, and displaced persons. Human is the latest addition to this list. (p. 75)

Reasons of migration are multifaceted and very complex. According to Renkin (2017:7), '[*t*]he reasons why people migrate can be described within three categories: social, political and economic'. Ekambaram (2019) asserted that:

> [*M*]igration and movement of people includes refugees fleeing conflict and violence in fear of persecution, but it also includes people fleeing unliveable conditions created by economic crises in the cases of Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi, among other countries in Africa. (p. 217)

In this case, Renkin (2017:7) concluded that 'The high level of poverty in their area and the prospects of employment or to attain a better life play a role in the decision-making process to migrate'. In addition, Adepoju (2019) provided a broader summary on reasons for African migration, which are as follows:

> Migrants and refugees in Africa share a number of common features: both are essentially intraregional movements caused in large part by a set of interrelated factors – conflicts, underdevelopment, poor governance, economic and social deprivation, environmental crisis, human rights abuses, and so on. (p. 1)

Migration, however, of foreign nationals to South Africa documented or undocumented come with serious ethical and missiological challenges from socio-economic and political fronts. These include

issues of human trafficking (Mangoedi & Mogashoa 2014:2), human rights abuses, forced and cheap labour or exploitation of foreign nationals by farmers, mega-corporations (Van Wyk & Vorster 2012:9) and those in the catering industry, and criminal activities by undocumented foreign nationals. Challenges around migration, in particular for undocumented foreign nationals, have led to different forms of contestations, marginalisation and xenophobic attacks on foreign nationals in some cases (Mashau 2019a:1). Consequently, foreign nationals in South Africa have, in some instances, been treated with suspicion and rejection (Mashau 2019a:4). In this article, we intend to reflect on the issue of migration and how best one can deconstruct the economics and politics of labour migration in the City of Tshwane. We do so by reading Genesis 41:41–57 from the perspective of both the learned and ordinary reader of the text and see how the biblical lessons can be applied in a real-life context to bring about transformation in terms of how we should engage migrants in the context of this research study.

# Literature review on labour migration

## Labour migration: A historical perspective

The history of labour migration existed in South Africa as early as the 19th century, and it refers to both internal and cross-border movements of people to urban areas. Whilst internal migration refers to people from rural areas and former homelands in particular, people from the outskirts of Pretoria form part of this. Those considered to be cross-border migrants were mainly from Mozambique, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Botswana, Zambia, Malawi and Namibia. However, this is not such a pleasant history. Wentzel and Tlabela (2006) captured the gravity of the matter as follows:

> South Africa has a sad history of racially-based government interventions in the movement and settlement patterns of its own people and those from other countries in the region, with grave effects on the well-being of most of its population. (pp. 93–94)

Historically, internal and cross-border movement of migrant workers to urban areas like the City of Tshwane was restricted through the system of pass laws and other legislative policies, which include the Native Affairs Act of 1920, *the Natives* (Urban Areas) *Act* of 1923, the *Native Law Amendment Act* of 1937, The Natives (Urban Areas) *Consolidation Act* of 1945 and the *Natives Law Amendment Act* of 1952, the pass laws and the Abolition of *Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act* No. 67 of 1952, the *Group Areas Act*, No. 41 of 1950 (Wentzel & Tlabela 2006:84–87) and the *Aliens Control Act* 96 of 1991. All these acts are based on the *Land Act* of 1913 and somehow have affected the movement of migrant workers. Influx and mobility of movement by migrant labours were not only restricted but also enforced through these legislative policies.

## Labour migration and government policy post-1994

After the apartheid era, two Acts were promulgated, namely, the *Refugees Act* 130 of 1998 and the *Immigration Act* 13 of 2002. Although, as mentioned earlier, the *Aliens Control Act* 96 of 1991 still continued even after the apartheid era, the racial provisions were removed (Crush & Dodson 2017:282). The *Immigration Act* was fully accepted in 2005. This policy opened doors for migrants, although under strict conditions. The adoption of the policy by the South African government meant that South African employers could have access to foreign skills but only on a temporary basis (Crush & Dodson 2017:283). According to the *Immigration Act*, work permits are granted under strict regulations. As recorded in the policy, a migrant can get a permanent work permit for a minimum of 5 years only in a situation where a South African cannot fill a post or when her or his spouse is a South African national or permanent resident (Crush & Dodson 2017:283). In addition, temporary resident permits are approved only for visitors, Southern African Development Community (SADC) citizens and their relatives. However, their holders are not allowed to have a worker's permit, and duration of the temporary resident's permit is limited (Crush & Dodson 2017:283).

## Labour migration post-1994

The face of migration changed immensely since 1994. Whilst the apartheid government's race-based immigration policy accommodated only white immigrants of European descent (Crush & Dodson 2017:278), the new progressive legislation of the democratic South Africa allows foreign nationals rights to citizenship and permanent residency in South Africa. Consequently, the categorisation of migrant workers also changed to include, amongst others, skilled immigrants, documented migrants, undocumented or unauthorised migrants (see Wentzel & Tlabela 2006:78–79). Undocumented or unauthorised cross-border migrants include, amongst others, those who have been smuggled or trafficked into the country for economic or political reasons. Some of these people fall into the category of cheap labour, and this has caused tensions with locals who think that foreigners are here to steal their jobs. It is asserted: '[*t*]hese changes have been set in motion by globalisation, the collapse of apartheid, and economic, political and social crises in other parts of Africa' (the Labour Market Review of 2007:2). However, the policy did not change immediately after the fall of apartheid era. The apartheid era *Aliens Control Act* 96 of 1991 continued but with amendments regarding its explicit racial provisions (Crush & Dodson 2017:282).

The number of migrants in South Africa since the fall of the apartheid era is likely to be higher than that recorded. According to Statistic South Africa (Stats SA), the census of 2011 recorded 2 199 871 number of immigrants who are foreign born and now have become permanent residents of South Africa (Lehohla 2015). In addition, there are migrants who have received permanent residence permits issued by the Department of Home Affairs. In 2012, the number was 1283, and in 2013 the number was 2013, varying between the Zimbabweans and Nigerians being the top 2, followed by Indians, Chinese, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis (Crush & Dodson 2017:278). However, when compared with temporary resident permits, the number is higher. According to Crush and Dodson (2017:279), the number of migrants in recent

years amounts to 100 000 to 150 000. They all differ, from tourists to students to people seeking employment to people with business interests.

### Migrant workers: A curse or a blessing

Migration did not only change in terms of who enters the country or who leaves the country; this movement came with economic implications. The Department of Home Affairs issues permits based on two categories – foreign-born migrants are considered as permanent residents. In addition, the Department issues temporary permits to those who hold work permits. Most of the migrants who hold temporary resident permits are mineworkers. According to Crush and Dodson (2017:280), the number of migrant mineworkers rose by 47% in 1990 to a high of 59% in 1997 and fell to 38% in 2006. In 2014, the number had declined to 28%. This had a huge impact on the economy of those countries from which the migrant workers came, especially Crush and Dodson 2017:280). As a result, the majority of female migrants had to come to the country and take up jobs as domestic workers followed by trading activities (Crush & Dodson 2017:281). The latter observation might be a positive contributor to the economy of the country. Crush and Dodson (2017:281) continued by saying that women, especially from the SADC no longer migrate as dependants. They take up moneymaking opportunities that were previously available to men and work independently. The Labour Migration report of 2007 stated that:

> [*I*]n terms of visitors total direct spend by country, in 2005 seven of the top 10 spending countries were from the SADC region including the top 4 which is Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho and Botswana. (p. 9)

According to the latter, the economy of the country is undeniably partially dependant on the neighbouring countries. The question is how the Immigration Act policy plays a role in ensuring that migrants integrate well into the country without causing friction amongst the citizens. The next section reflects on the policy of migration and its dynamics.

### Labour migration, contestations and homelessness in the City of Tshwane

Migration to the City of Tshwane has been an ongoing phenomenon (Mashau 2019a). It applies to both internal and cross-border migrants. Migration to the City of Tshwane has been mainly because of push and pull factors, and to some extent a forced movement – be it human trafficking (Mangoedi & Mogashoa 2014) or political and economic conditions in the country of origin (Resane 2019:1). Speaking of South Africa as a whole, but something which is also relevant for the City of Tshwane, it is asserted:

> Post-apartheid South Africa has become an important destination for millions of migrants from the rest of the world and mostly from other African countries because of the opportunities it offers as a democratic country and the major economic and industrial powerhouse of the continent. (Mangu 2019:46)

Historically, there has always been three faces of migration in South Africa and its cities, namely, (1) forced removal as experienced mainly by blacks in the 1960s and 1970s (Kgatla 2013:120), (2) human trafficking, and (3) hard economic and political conditions in neighbouring African countries. Migration to the City of Tshwane has led to diverse contestations, namely, spatial contestation (De Beer 2008), economic contestation, and political contestation (Buffel 2013). Because of these contestations, in some cases foreign migrants, in particular African migrants, become victims of xenophobic violence as they scramble for resources with locals (Mangu 2019:46).

## Research methodology

The research method that was applied in this article is the Contextual Bible Study (CBS) method that was developed by Gerald West (1993:11). According to West (1993:120), there are four core commitments or core values at the heart of this method, namely:

- a commitment to read the Bible from the perspective of the South African context, particularly from the perspective of the poor and oppressed,
- a commitment to read the bible in community with others, particularly with those from contexts different from our own,
- a commitment to read the Bible critically,
- a commitment to individual and social transformation through a CBS.

In addition to the four, Esala (2016:437) proposed the following two more core commitments or values:

- a commitment to the analysis of layers of context in self, society and biblical texts, including economic, political, cultural and religious layers of context,
- a commitment to read the Bible foregrounding issues of contestation of the God of life against the idols of death.

Contextual Bible Study, therefore, serves as a liberation hermeneutic that enables trained and ordinary readers of the biblical text to collaborate in the effort to tease out contextually relevant solutions to challenges faced by those in the margins of every society. West (2015:261) correctly asserted that '[*c*]ontextual Bible Study occupies a collaborative nexus between the epistemology of the poor and marginalised and the critical capacities of socially engaged biblical scholarship'. Theologically, whether approached from an ethical or missiological perspectives, this approach to reading the Bible instils a culture where human beings are able to stand together in solidarity in the efforts to push social transformation agenda. Consequently, '[*p*]roponents of CBS have claimed that the end goal of CBS is transformation, liberation and change' (Nadar 2009:387). Missiologically, CBS provides a space for transformative encounters where the church serves as a transforming agent as it stands with God and the process in the efforts to stand for God, the truth, beyond known borders and in solidarity with those in the

margins (Mashau 2018:138–139). This approach helps to affirm the *imago Dei* in all of humanity, irrespective of their educational and social standing in society as well.

From an ethical perspective, CBS also creates a space for creative and critical engagement between trained and ordinary readers as they make efforts to fight for the protection of the rights of all. This minimises the space for abuse by one with another. For instance, in the case of marginalised foreign migrant workers in the City of Tshwane, advocacy to integrate foreign nationals in the mainstream of the South African economy is not only made but also immoral issues that come with illegal migrant workers are exposed and discouraged.

Together with 23 participants, ordinary readers of the text, we read from Genesis 41:41–57. Fourteen of the participants were migrants from other provinces of South Africa, but we also had nine foreign nationals from other parts of Africa. Out of the entire group, seven were men and all from South Africa. Most of them came to Pretoria for a better livelihood. All of them were homeless, whilst the ladies were housed or given accommodation by the Tshwane Leadership Foundation. When West introduced the CBS, the main idea was to read the Bible from the perspective of the South African context, particularly of the poor and oppressed (West 1993:12). West used the concept 'ordinary' when referring to those who are theologically illiterate but who listen to, discuss and re-tell the Bible in an untrained or pre-critical way (West 1993:9). In this context, participants were the ordinary readers. The group comprised of four focus groups and were in the age group between 24 and 38 years. According to Sue Wilkinson, the focus group concept means 'an informal discussion among selected individuals about specific topics' (1999:182). Each group had a facilitator and secretary who captured all the responses and submitted them to us as researchers. When the CBS method is correctly used by ordinary readers in particular, it becomes a transforming and liberating tool.

# Theological reflection of Genesis 41:41–57

According to Snyman (2019), the:

> [*S*]tory of migration and exile starts with Adam and Eve when they are banished from the Garden of Eden and barred from returning with two angels guarding the eastern entrance to the garden. (p. 2)

The story of human migration continued with Abraham and many other patriarchs that can be traced in the book of Genesis (Strine 2019:55). In Genesis 41:41–57, we read the narrative of Joseph who migrated to Egypt as a forced labourer or a slave (see Magezi 2019:5). In analysing the text, themes such as migration, human trafficking or slavery, labour, economics, politics and Egyptian empire or king surfaced and will be looked at in depth.

## Migration: The context of Genesis 41:41–57

Genesis 41:41–57 is one of the texts that speaks on the issue of migration in a very close way. Migration in this instance refers to the movement of Joseph from his land of origin to Egypt. Joseph moved to Egypt as a slave (Gn 37:18–36), was blessed by God in everything he touched and he ended up serving as a personal assistant to Potiphar (captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt) and an administrator of his wealth, something that brought peace and prosperity to his household (Gn 39:1–6). However, Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph of an attempted rape, which led to his imprisonment (Magezi 2019:5–6). It is in this context that Joseph's journey can be captured as a move from a pit to a palace and from a prison to a palace of Pharaoh in Egypt as captured in the title of this article.

## Migration and human trafficking

Joseph's journey as a migrant worker in Egypt is a narrative that speaks about human trafficking or slavery in ancient times (see Wagner-Tsukamoto 2017:226; Warner 2019:44). As a result of familial rivalry, Joseph's brothers decided to strip off his coat and throw him in a pit (Green 2013:35), and later sold him as a slave to a group of Ishmaelite traders who, in turn, took him to Egypt (Gn 37:18–28) and sold him to Potiphar as already noted. Strine (2019:58) considered this kind of migration as involuntary migration. It was a forced migration, with Joseph's brothers having decided to engage in human trafficking because of his father's favour and the two dreams about his incoming role as a leader of the family (Adamo 2013:416; cf. Gn 37:3–4, 5–11; Antwi 2017:18).

## Joseph as a migrant worker in a foreign land

In Egypt, Joseph served in many roles. He started as a personal assistant to Potiphar but because of God's blessings in his life, Joseph was successful and ended up earning the position of an administrator of Potiphar's wealth. Whilst serving in Potiphar's house, Potiphar's wife accused Joseph of attempted rape as already noted. This accusation landed Joseph in jail, and it was at this point that, as a migrant worker, he started using his gift of interpreting dreams (Widder 2014:1116). Genesis 41:41–57 should, therefore, be understood within the context of Joseph's ability to interpret Pharaoh's dreams accurately as recorded in Genesis 41:1–40. In the execution of his duties, Joseph was very wise and discerning. According to Strine (2019:60), '[*f*]rom the perspective of an involuntary migrant, what is even more striking is Joseph's willingness to integrate into Pharaoh's court and Egyptian society when offered the opportunity'. In the end, Joseph was able to help the host country Egypt and the surrounding countries to plan thoroughly and wisely for 7 years of severe famine.

## The economics of migration in Genesis 41:41–57

The narrative of Joseph in Genesis 41:38–39 calls for attention to the interplay of religion, politics and economics in Joseph's life as a migrant worker in Egypt (see Widder 2014:1119). Using God's given gift to interpret dreams and informing the Egyptians of God as the source of his abilities, his lived faith and firm conviction in the Sovereign Lord earned Joseph an

entry point into the mainstream economy of Egypt. Also, it is important to note that the name Egypt is used to embrace both rural agrarian areas and their cities (Gn 41:48). In his analysis of the economy of Egypt under the influence of Joseph as a migrant labourer, Wagner-Tsukamoto (2017:227–228) highlighted the following economic developments:

- Bureaucratically stratified society and economy with differentiated occupational functions in place as also reflected in Genesis 39:1, 20; 40:2–3; 41:19; 48–49; 47:5–6, 22, 26; 50:2.
- Egypt had a reward and promotion system in place, and it is a system that saw Joseph being promoted to the highest office in the country as also captured in Genesis 41:39–44.
- Joseph set up a barter tax system for crop farming that saw 20% of crop harvests skimmed off and stored away by the Egyptian administration (Gn 41: 34, 47–49), tax that saved the Egyptians during 7 years of famine.
- Joseph set up trade laws that were used to exchange goods during the time of famine as recorded in Genesis 47:13–21.

### From a pit to a palace: The politics of migration in Genesis 41:41–57

The Egyptian society and politics were structured in a hierarchical order, and the economy was bureaucratically stratified as already noted. What is noteworthy, in this article, is that their political policies were somehow friendly to migrant workers. The fact that Joseph, as a foreign migrant worker, was even promoted to be second-in-command in Egypt shows that '… foreigners were rewarded and promoted in Egypt's cities and that these cities were open regarding the influx of foreigners' (Wagner-Tsukamoto 2017:228). Joseph's prowess and ability to execute his tasks faithfully earned him a good standing in Pharaoh's regime. His narrative captures the imagination of what it means to be lifted from the pit of death to the palace – where he was treated as royalty. Speaking in the context of the impending hunger crisis in Egypt and Joseph's advice to the king, Strine (2019:60) noted that 'Pharaoh not only accepts Joseph's unsolicited advice, but appoints Joseph as the one to implement it as his second-in-command'. Joseph was richly rewarded for his excellent service and loyalty to his masters in Egypt. He was not only recognised but also given full rights of participating in the politics of the country in a big way – his status was changed from being a prisoner to a ruler (Marzouk 2019:74). Joseph was entrusted with the responsibility of designing the direction Egypt should take moving to the future.

### Migrant work(ers): A curse or a blessing to the host nation?

The most critical question that Joseph's narrative helps us to understand is the role that a community in diaspora can play in developing the host nation, both economically and politically. Joseph was a very successful migrant worker in Egypt and this is recorded as follows: '[*t*]he LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master' (Gn 39:2). As a migrant worker, Joseph served as one serving the Lord and God used him greatly to impact and change the lives of many in his host country. Joseph used his gifts to the benefit of all. It is interesting to note that his success and the fact that it came through the strength received from his God, was noticed by his master and everyone in the host nation (Gn 39:3; Gn 41:37–40; Widder 2014:1117). Joseph was therefore a blessing to the host nation and not a curse. For the migrant worker to become a blessing to his host nation is also dependent on mutual reception, respect and collaboration that allow for seamless integration into the host nation. Marzouk (2019) captures this as follows:

> The interaction between Joseph and Pharaoh in Genesis 41 suggests that – granted the openness of the host society toward foreigners – the *integration* of forced migrants into foreign cultures empowers migrants to turn their calamities into opportunities and to turn threats of death into possibilities of a prosperous life. (p. 72)

Because of this approach, a foreign national was allowed an opportunity to serve as an agent of change and in the process prospered his host nation.

## Contextual reading of Genesis 41:41–57

To open up a conversation and to encourage dialogue with ordinary readers of Genesis 41:41–57, three questions based on the world of the text and the text within the context of migrants in the City of Tshwane were put to the ordinary readers.

On the first question asked, '[*w*]hat was the text all about?' The group responded as follows:

- Joseph's anointing as a leader, trust and the crowning of Joseph as governor to be in charge of food security in Egypt.
- 7 years of lots of food in Egypt.
- abundance.
- 7 years of drought.
- poverty and hunger.
- Joseph settling down in Egypt.
- Joseph marrying and having children.

The understanding of the text was significant so that the discussion could be viable. Furthermore, the second question involved sub-group discussions where they had to re-tell the story in their own words. There was a consensus that the story was about the Pharaoh inaugurating Joseph as governor of Egypt, putting his signet ring and gold chain on him. The highlight of the story was based on how Joseph saved Egypt during the 7 years of famine. During the seven good years of agricultural yields, he stored abundant food enough for all cities. The food could not be counted; it was too much. Adding to the story was that Joseph's children Manasseh and Ephraim were born.

During the 7 years of famine, Egypt never experienced hunger or famine because the storehouses were full. Joseph was able to supply the whole country. Joseph and Pharaoh's

relation grew stronger. Group 1 highlighted that it was based on trust and faithfulness. Honour and loyalty also came out strong. As they substantiated the basis of their argument, group 1 said that:

> 'Joseph was the advisor to Pharaoh and he was overseeing the whole of Egypt. Pharaoh trusted Joseph to the point of protecting him against anyone who didn't believe in his authority [*sic*]'. (p. 1)

Although the group did not have any theological background, the engagement of the text was profound. In answering the third question about identifying the main characters and what they knew about them, they mentioned:

- Joseph and he was identified as the one for whom his father made a colourful coat; he was a son of Jacob, a dreamer and an interpreter of dreams.
- Pharaoh, the King of Egypt. He had dreams and Joseph helped to interpret them. He promoted Joseph to be a leader of Egypt because of his skill to interpret dreams.
- Asenath, the wife of Joseph. Asenath was given to Joseph for marriage.
- Manasseh and Ephraim. Two of Joseph's sons were born there [*in Egypt*].
- Potiphera was a priest of a town in Egypt called On and he was also a father of Asenath, who became a wife of Joseph as recorded in Genesis 41:45.

### Migrations and the role of migrants in the host city

After interrogating the world of the text, the text was also put into context, and the following questions were asked in engaging the relevant context.

On the question of whether Joseph had a role to play in their context, group 1 had two conflicting answers: They answered both yes and no. 'Yes, because some people come to work to take care of their families and some have come to do drugs which are destructive. No, because there is xenophobia'. Group 3 asserted that '[*t*]he government does not allow people to fight so it can be safe. But the people keep on killing the foreigners' [*sic*]. The question of xenophobia emerged again. Group 4 had a different opinion, '[*m*]igrants had no role to play within the City of Tshwane'. The reasons provided included the following: '[*t*]here are no jobs, facilities, life is expensive and there is too much homeless – no[*n*] job creation'. In addition, group 2 said that '[*w*]e need from the City of Tshwane (to) rebuild homeless people by creating job for them [*sic*]'.

As to who represented Pharaoh in their context, group 3 spoke about President Zuma and that he was not doing enough to protect foreigners. Group 4 spoke about the president not creating jobs for locals and that is why there is xenophobia. In addition, group 1 agreed that Pharaoh is Jacob Zuma because he is the president of South Africa. Group 2 gave the example of Danny Jordaan [*president of South African Football Association*] as a Joseph who works with Zuma to give foreign players the opportunity to play football in South Africa.

### Security of migrant workers and the question of belonging

In answering the question about safety, the four groups again had different answers. Group 1 was of the opinion that 'it would be possible if the people accepted one another and know that no one is important than the other, whether you are this tribe or that tribe, this nationality or that nationality'. This group highlighted the issue of tribalism and the significance of belonging somewhere. According to group 3:

> [*A*]lthough people have certain cultural norms and practices, they are required also to accommodate diversity although not conforming to other practices. However, nationality discrimination remains an obstacle between the natives and migrants. (p. 3)

In emphasising this point, the group continued to say, '[*p*]eople consider themselves more important than other, whether you are Namibian, Zimbabwean, Malawian, Pedi, Zulu, or Venda we are all the same'. Group 3 added that '[*i*]t is unreasonable and foolish to think that we are different. We are all Africans' [*sic*]. Group 2 went on to say that the 'City of Tshwane is not safe for migrants because of crime activities (although not clear who is doing the crime), police corruption, domestic abuse and drug business'. One of the significant areas that is highlighted is human trafficking. In the context of human trafficking and forced labour in the City of Tshwane, Mangoedi and Mogashoa (2014:2) highlighted the plight, vulnerabilities and marginalisation of foreign women and called on women to use the Bible as a liberating tool, especially when the CBS method of Gerald West is applied. The group continued to emphasise that 'the city is not safe anymore because of poverty' [*sic*]. Group 4 shared a different view, saying that 'foreigners will only be safe in our city if government creates jobs for locals and foreigners do not steal from them'. It is clear from their answers that group 4 had mainly locals as participants.

## Finding solutions to migration within the City of Tshwane

On the question of possible solutions to migration challenges in the City of Tshwane, the theme of education kept on emerging from all the sub-groups as a way of overcoming poverty and hardships amongst migrants in the City of Tshwane. Group 2 contributed by saying '[*p*]eople come to this city thinking they make it in life in the city without education. Education is important'. Group 4 was concerned about the lack of resources for young homeless people:

> There is even less education for young homeless youth. The city need more homeless people who have a mind of business. Officials of the City must find them and train them [*and*] to be more skilled and they become more creative in life like Joseph in Egypt. (p. 4)

Group 1 remarked that '[*t*]hey have the skills but do not have papers to show the skills. They don't have material to do what they know [*sic*]'. It is clear that participants, and mainly

those who are migrants, were aware of their skills and what they can do to contribute towards the economy of the city. However, the opportunities are not easily accessible. They mentioned a few obstacles such as homelessness and xenophobia. Group 1 said, '[*x*]enophobia is prevalent amongst people of the lowest ranks in society. The poorest and the most uneducated always looking for an opportunity to destroy and loaf [*sic*]'. In the next section, the engagement will touch on the emerging voices between the ordinary and the learned voices.

## Synthesis: Emerging voices

When performing a synthesis of the voices of both trained and ordinary readers of the text in the context of Genesis 41:41–57, the following emerged:

- Migration, as movement of people and dislocation from their places of origin, internal and cross-border, is a current reality that can be traced back to ancient times as in the story of Joseph in Genesis 41. Whilst trained readers of the Bible were able to point out that Joseph's story is one of forced migrations or human trafficking or slavery, ordinary readers of the Bible did not make any such distinction between voluntary and forced migration. However, ordinary readers of the text were fully conscious of internal and cross-border migration, seeing that they were able to make clear distinctions between local migrants and foreign migrants.
- As for the main thrust of Genesis 41:41–57, both ordinary and trained readers of the text were able to pick up that it was about a migrant Joseph who was able to rise to the highest office in Egypt. They understood the implication of such integration and how it benefitted the host nation. In a way, both readers understood the political and economic dynamics of Joseph's promotion. It is also very clear for both the readers that life in a foreign country is possible, having reflected on Joseph's marriage and the birth of his two sons in Egypt.
- Whilst both trained and ordinary readers of the Bible pointed out that Joseph was able to use his gift of interpreting the dreams to benefit the host country, there were some amongst the ordinary readers of the text, especially group 4, who felt that the skills of foreigners are not needed in the context of the City of Tshwane because of lack of jobs for locals.
- Migration comes with its own challenges. In the case of Joseph, he was accused falsely and thrown in jail by Potiphar's wife, and both trained and ordinary readers of the text were able to pick on this matter. In the eyes of ordinary readers, especially when applying the migration story to their context in the City of Tshwane, foreigners are accused of drug peddling and stealing local jobs; hence, there are reports of xenophobic attacks against African migrants.
- Whilst the trained readers and some from amongst ordinary readers (Groups 1, 2 and 3) agree that integration into local politics and economy is possible if handled well like in the case of Joseph, group 4 would have none of that. They were of the view that cases of xenophobia will continue until government is able to create jobs for locals. However, there was overwhelming support for the notion of foreign migrants as a blessing to their host nation. Just like in the case of Joseph, foreigners are able to use their gifts for the benefit of their host nation – politically and economically.
- As for the solution to the issue of migration, trained readers focused mainly on redefining the story of migration from contestation to integration and belonging (see Mashau 2019b:240); whilst the creative tension between locals and foreign nationals, as the scramble for resources continues, remains amongst ordinary readers. Ordinary readers discussed and agreed that education is key in providing lasting solutions, but still placed high emphasis on government intervention – especially with regard to job creation for locals.

## Conclusion

It is clear from the foregoing study that issues of contestations, marginalisation and xenophobic attacks directed towards foreign nationals continue to dominate the discourse on migration in the City of Tshwane. Whilst there are many contributory factors to cross-border migration, it has been concluded, in the light of Geneses 41:41–57, that human trafficking is one of the human rights abuses that come with migration. This article argued for an approach of integration, where foreign nationals who are well-documented are given space to contribute to the mainstream economy of South Africa, but at the same time should be cautious against human rights abuses that occur as a result of migration. On the one hand, locals are warned not to exploit foreign nationals. On the other hand, foreign nationals are encouraged to take the legal route in registering their presence and companies in South Africa, whilst joining hands with locals in fighting against criminal activities by undocumented foreign nationals.

## Acknowledgements

The authors thank everyone that contributed to the publication of this article.

### Competing interests

The authors declare that no competing interests exist.

### Authors' contribution

All authors contributed equally to this work.

### Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

### Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

## Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

# References


Adamo, D.T., 2013, 'The African wife of Joseph, Asenath (Gen 41:45, 41:50, 46:20)', *Journal for Semitics* 22(2), 409–425.

Adepoju, A., 2005, 'Review of research and data on human trafficking in sub-Saharan Africa', in F. Laczko & E. Gozdziak (eds.), *Data and research on human trafficking: A global survey*, pp. 74–98, IOM, Geneva.

Adepoju, A., 2019, 'Migrants and refugees in Africa', in W. Thompson (ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia: Politics*, pp. 1–26, Oxford University Press, London.

Antwi, E.K.E., 2017, 'Younger-brother motif in Genesis as an object of love and hatred in the family: Tensions, conflicts and reflection for the contemporary African family', *OTE* 30(1), 11–29. https://doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2017/v30n1a3

Buffel, O.A., 2013, 'Mission as liberation in socio-economic and political contexts: Towards contextual and liberating theology of mission in the context of migration and human dislocation', *Missionalia* 41(3), 239–255. https://doi.org/10/7832/41-3-38

Crush, J. & Dodson, B., 2017, *Harnessing migration for inclusive growth and development in Southern Africa*, Southern African Migration Programme, Cape Town.

De Beer, S.F., 2008, 'Contesting inner-space: Global trends, local exclusion/s and alternative Christian spatial praxis', *Missionalia* 36(2/3), 181–207.

Ekambaram, S.S., 2019, 'Foreign nationals are the "non-whites" of the democratic dispensation', in V. Satgar (ed.), *Racism after apartheid: Challenges for Marxism and Anti-Racism*, pp. 217–236, Wits University Press, Johannesburg. https://doi.org.10.18772/22019033061

Esala, N., 2016, 'Loyalty and liberation: *Skopos* theory's ethic in dialogue with contextual Bible study's commitments', *OTE* 29(3), 434–454. https://doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2016/v29n3a5

Gordon, S., 2019, 'A violent minority? A quantitative analysis of those engaged in anti-immigrant violence in South Africa', *South African Geographical Journal* 101(2), 269–283. https://doi.org/10.1080/03736245.2019.1599413

Green, B., 2013, 'God's Holy Spirit: A back-story from the Joseph narrative', *Acta Theologica* 17(Suppl), 25–49. https://doi.org/10.4314/actat.v32i2S.5

Kgatla, S.T., 2013, 'Forced removals and migration: A theology of resistance and liberation in South Africa', *Missionalia* 41(2), 120–132. https://doi.org/10.7832/41-2-9

Labour Market Review, 2007, *Labour migration and South Africa: Towards a fairer deal for migrants in the South African Economy*, Department of Labour, South Africa.

Lehohla, P., 2015, *Census 2011: Migration dynamics in South Africa*, Statistics South Africa, Pretoria.

Mangoedi, L. & Mogashoa, M., 2014, 'Mission from the margins: A reflection on faith by "women" displaced or trafficked into forced labour in the City of Tshwane', *Missionalia* 42(1/2), 88–106. https://doi.org/10.7832/42-1-2-53

Magezi, C., 2019, 'Migration history in South Africa as a lens for interpreting God's mission: Towards a challenge for churches to embrace migrants', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 40(1), a1887. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v40i1.1887

Mangu, A.M., 2019, 'Xenophobia and migration in post-apartheid South Africa: Myths and realities', *African Journal of Democracy & Governance* 6(1), 45–72.

Marzouk, S., 2019, 'Migration in the Joseph narrative', *Hebrew Studies* 60, 71–90. https://doi.org/10.23.07/26833106

Mashau, T.D., 2018, 'Standing where God stands: JNJ Kritzinger as an encountering missionary missiologist', *Missionalia* 46(1), 131–145. http://doi.org/10.7832/46-1-278

Mashau, T.D., 2019a, 'Foreigners go home! Re-imagining ubuntology and the agency of faith communities in addressing the migration crisis in the City of Tshwane', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 75(4), a5595. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i4.5595

Mashau, T.D., 2019b, 'Seek the shalom of the city: Homelessness and faith communities in diaspora', *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 5(1), 239–261. https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2019.v5n1.a12

Nadar, S., 2009, 'Beyond the "ordinary reader" and the "invisible intellectual": Shifting Contextual Bible Study from Liberation Discourse to liberation Pedagogy', *OTE* 22(2), 384–483.

Newaj, K., 2020, 'Defining fairness in dismissals of unauthorised foreign nations', *PER/PELJ* 23, 1–25. https://doi.org/10.17159/1727-3781/2020/v23i0a7586

Renkin, W., 2017, 'Responses to migration: Tensions and ambiguities of churches in Pretoria Central and Mamelodi East', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 73(3), a4725. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4725

Resane, K.T., 2019, 'Demographic change: Ecological and polycentric challenges for white Christianity in urban South Africa', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 75(1), a5266. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i1.5266

Ribbens, M. & De Beer, S.F., 2017, 'Churches claiming a right to the city? Lived urbanisms in the City of Tshwane', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 73(3), a4690. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4690

Snyman, G., 2019, 'Cain and migration: Opportunity amidst punishment?', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 75(3), a5167. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i3.5167

Strine, C.A., 2019, 'The famine in the land was severe: Environmentally induced involuntary migration and the Joseph narrative', *Hebrew Studies* 60, 55–69. https://doi.org/10.2307/26833105

Van Wyk, J. & Vorster, N., 2012, 'An introduction to the theological political-ethical thinking of Koos Vorster', *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 46(1), Art. #76, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v46i1.76

Wagner-Tsukomoto, S.A., 2017, 'The cities of Genesis: Religion, economics and the rise of modernity', *Textual Cultures* 11(1/2), 206–245. https://doi.org/10.2307/26662797

Warner, M., 2019, 'You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt: Joseph and the perils of uber-assimilation as response to involuntary migration', *Hebrew Studies* 60, 43–54. https://doi.org/10.2307/26833104

Wentzel, M. & Tlabela, K., 2006, 'Historical background to South African migration', in P. Kok, D. Gelderblom, J.O. Oucho & I. Van Zyl (eds.), *Migration in South and Southern Africa*, pp. 71–95, HSRC Press, Cape Town.

West, G.O., 1993, *Contextual Bible study*, Cluster Publications, Pietermaritzburg.

West, G.O., 2015, 'Reading the Bible with the marginalised: The value/s of contextual Bible reading', *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 1(2), 235–261. https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2015.v1n2.a11

Widder, W.L., 2014, 'The court stories of Joseph (Gen 41) and Daniel (Dan 2) in canonical context: A theological paradigm for God's work among the nations', *OTE* 27(3), 1112–1128.

Wilkinson, S., 1999, 'Focus groups: A feminist method', *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 23(2), 221–244. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1999.tb00355.x